

# Lithuania's Sole Refinery Shuts Down

## Secessionist Republic May Seek to Use Overseas Gold Deposits

Associated Press

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., April 23—Lithuania's lone oil refinery closed today as the Kremlin's economic embargo against the breakaway Baltic republic dried up raw materials, and Lithuanian government officials said they may try to sell gold reserves held abroad to pay for fuel imports.

The refinery, situated at Mazheikiai near the border with Soviet Latvia, had been operating for the past several days on reserves, said plant spokeswoman Lidiya Cheblakova in a telephone interview. The refinery's 2,000 workers were now without jobs, Cheblakova said, adding: "The mood is tense, worrisome."

The Soviets shut off the pipeline feeding the plant last Wednesday and later curtailed natural-gas supplies and shipments of other products to Lithuania in the toughest move yet in the Kremlin's campaign to force the defiant republic to rescind laws resulting from its March 11 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

The Mazheikiai refinery had been converting about 12 million tons of crude oil into gasoline annually, about a quarter of that supplying Lithuania and the rest shipped to the nearby Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia and Byelorussia.

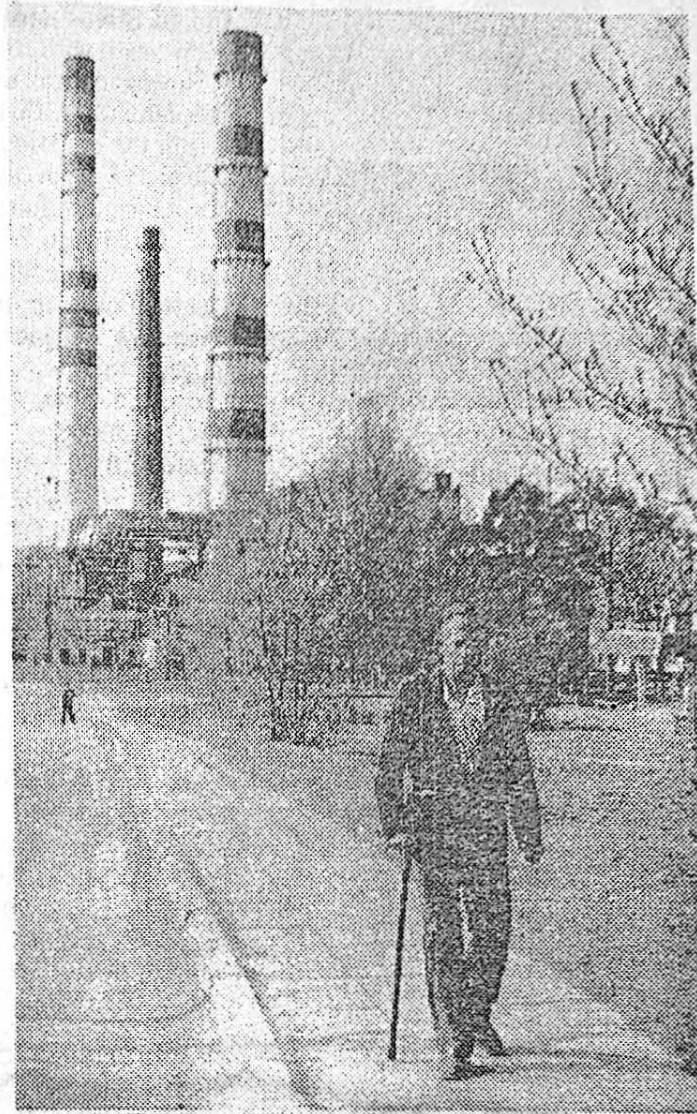
Lithuania has virtually no hard currency with which to buy alternative fuel supplies, but Premier Kazimiera Prunskiene said today that her government might seek to cash in gold reserves transferred to France more than 50 years ago in the waning weeks of Lithuania's pre-World War II independence. She told reporters in Moscow, however, that the idea had not been finally approved by the Lithuanian leadership.

Lithuania transferred gold now worth about \$28 million to France just before the republic was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, but at present-day petroleum usage rates, the republic requires an estimated \$55 million worth of oil products a month. The Bank of France said last month that it would return the gold to Lithuania if the French government recognizes it as an independent state. Prunskiene also told reporters during a brief visit to Sweden today that she had opened an account with a Swedish bank for deposits of foreign donations to Lithuania.

Here in the Lithuanian capital, some bus routes have been suspended, and the main thoroughfare, Gedimina Street, was practically devoid of vehicles as Lithuanians struggled with gasoline rationing that limits them to about eight gallons a month for private cars.

In Moscow, meanwhile, a new five-member delegation from Lithuania's parliament was seeking a meeting with members of President Mikhail Gorbachev's advisory council in hopes of bringing about a negotiated end to the impasse.

Gorbachev and his advisers have repeatedly rebuffed Lithuanian attempts to discuss the situation, and Arkady Maslennikov, Gorbachev's press secretary, said today that he did not know if any Soviet leaders would meet with the Lithuanians. "It depends on what they've come with," he told reporters.



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Stroller passes chimneys of shut-down Vilnius power plant.

Maslennikov said the Kremlin might consider negotiating with Lithuania if it froze its declaration of independence for two years, but he made it clear that the secessionist republic also would have to acknowledge it is subject to the Soviet Constitution. Lithuanian leaders repeatedly have refused to do that, saying their country was forcibly annexed by the Soviets and that they consider it to be still illegally occupied.

Elsewhere today, the British Broadcasting Corp. quoted Gorbachev's senior military adviser, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, as saying that the Soviet Army would not hesitate to use force to crush any illegal protests in Lithuania. "If the Lithuanian separatists break the law, then we will take measures to enforce the law. I am not afraid of using force if necessary," Akhromeyev said in an interview scheduled for broadcast this week.

Asked about Akhromeyev's comments, Landsbergis told reporters: "We must worry about such insanity. It's military madness. Force is always a real threat as long as there is no willingness to use politics. If they use force in Lithuania, it means they would be prepared to use force in the world."